New Landings:

Moving dialogue for settlers, unsettling, in place

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New Landings Independent Study
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December 14, 2020

To be in movement dialogue is to move in communication with another, and with the surroundings. In dialogue, there is a place for each person to speak from their own position. The less a person is occupied —with their thoughts, hxstories, their habituated patterning, —the more they can attune to the context where they are. So, the less one is occupied, the more they can listen. It can take practice to move through space and daily activities conscious of one's occupations, and practicing lessening them. This occupation of the mind is related to occupation of land. To move with, without extraction, rather attuning, one can shift implicit habits of territorializing. This is one step in capacity-building to acknowledge and then take responsibility in the harm of occupying territory, from how it is felt and enacted. This paper is concerned with developing measurement for moving in right relationship here on occupied land, and how this process can be shared.

2020. In the United States and shared around the globe, we have been facing myriad ecological, health, and racially-driven devastations and consequent uprisings, revealing a complex of inequities that have been mounting and revealed themselves in new scales. The elevation of challenge indeed invites, but more aptly requires, radical reimagining of society and practice. Through my research in movement and cultural practice over the years, I have been curious about connection of challenges between displacement, disembodiment, disconnect from surroundings, individualism, and the cultural extermination that comes with appropriation. In the past six months, I have been offering transdisciplinary group sessions centering movement dialogue, as a way to support contexts for conversation and the development of idea-creation in this reimagining. These sessions are called *New Landings.*

New Landings explores how a practice of subtle and sensing movement in receptivity with our surroundings can offer a key for contributing to just actions in this time. One area of

daily life that effects everyone either consciously or unconsciously is the continual harm of settler colonialism. With settler colonialism as a root challenge here in the States, the nexus of "settler," "unsettling," and "bodily settling" provides a rich locus for inquiry. In the *New Landings* sessions, participants practice critical reflection and develop capacity through collective intimacy with self, environment, and one another, and from these strategies, consider ways to make contributions in their respective places. "Landings" refers to the potential for accountability and reciprocity as settlers find a relationship to place in right relation, and "new" suggests that creative inquiry can provide a contribution to building culture.

So far, I have offered five session series in the past six months, mainly on the Zoom platform, though one of the session series took place live here locally in the California East Bay, Unceded Ohlone Land. The groups so far have ranged in length from six-week series to a single three-hour session, with participants aged from early twenties to late sixties, in multi-racial groupings, though predominantly white. I myself am a Jewish middle-aged dyke who benefits from settler privilege among others, and I am curious about providing space for this kind of conversation for several reasons. My experiences lead me to believe that: 1) subtle and sensing movement practices can support people to receive the connections between place and environment, which is supportive for their own growing, capacity for accountability, sense of belonging, connection to ancestry, and idea-creation, and this orientation has the potential to unsettle normative somatic approaches; 2) people who benefit from settler privilege could use supportive contexts to work through their positionality, so as not to center these issues in intercultural and Indigenous/non-Indigenous contexts; 3) when using movement-dialogue to do this work, it supports the development of living measurement; 4) working with multi-modal practices provides a space for flexible thinking which can engender new forms of practice; and

5) creating contexts where participants set intentions, make offerings, and contribute with and for one another, develops collective intimacy, prefiguring liberatory practice, and could be supportive for articulating potential future action. So, in a sense, *New Landings* sessions are one way to contribute to a long-term process of reimagining.

One of the radical possibilities of attuning to place through movement dialogue is to develop a capacity for living measurement, or the be able to read situations and act based on a subtle and attuned practice of multiple elements present, the surroundings, historical harms, inequities, the air, the breeze, all. This is a subtle and sensing approach affords the mover to presence and include themself while not centering themself. In *A Phenomenology of Whiteness,* Sara Ahmed discusses "habit worlds," and how they "can be bodily and spatial form of inheritance."[1] Oftentimes, people in positions of privilege who commit racial harm are not even aware of the complex of histories being reified and recapitulated by oversight. The *New Landings* sessions are an attempt to create a context for future potential intercultural dialogue, through developing capacities, accessing new ways of self-reflexivity, and inhabiting and composing themselves in context. Movement-dialogue is a powerful method for experiencing capacity for change.

While I am slowly developing clarity about approaches for stimulation of ideas in *New Landings* as the sessions continue, I am in early stages of practice and the project will most likely continue to morph. A main aspect of the potency of this work is the sessions create space for the unknown and unknowable, supporting self-reflection around hard topics, taking the time to receive them, and offering space for quietude, moving in breathing, and even darkness. So, alongside the emergence of ways to unsettle, to decolonize, to find right relation, there is much about what is not known to share with this work, too. The more I facilitate these contexts, the

more I become aware that the *New Landings* approach is *epigenic*: "each new development can only take place on the ground of the previous development, each facet deepens as one engages with it, and *a* will appear different after learning *b*….." [2] So, even as I have prepared for each class and come with ideas for what to offer in the group context, I am guided by what is emergent amongst the group, in the surroundings, and each session gives information for what will proceed. I, too, am practicing the dialogue.

Sources and Approach

There are multiple sources for *New Landings,* as it is a multi-modal field. The main catalyst and practice-base is *Amerta* Movement. *New Landings* is an application of the movement form developed after decades of study, collaboration and conversations with Suprapto Suryodarmo ("Prapto"), a contemporary Javanese artist who invented *Joged Amerta, or Amerta* Movement. *Amerta* Movement is a free movement form that intermixes meditation, the movement of daily life, ritual, and art creation and it is practiced and shared in many continents across the globe through a dynamic circulation of dialoguers and Amerta movers. Suprapto passed one year ago, and this work is evolving in honor of his life and practices. Based in movement dialogue, an Amerta practitioner shares movement from the sense of a garden, in which everyone can find their own growing. In living communication, one begins by receiving their surroundings, their own breathing-being, in intercultural conversations through movement, a dialogue in "we." Amerta movement offers a panoply of useful practices that can be applied to working around reciprocity and self-reflexivity in cultural context.

In early 2017, Tejakula, North Bali, after co-organizing and co-teaching a workshop called *Field of Reciprocity* with Suprapto Suryodarmo, Julie Nathanielsz, Sally Dean, and Lily

Kiara, I was explaining about the decolonizing practices of settler activists in the U.S., and the movement called "relanding"[3]. In response, Prapto explained the practice of "non-violence for non-violence' and creative evolution in intercultural dialogue. In that meeting, he and I decided that the term "New Landings" would offer an approach for landing with a potential for movement-creation through conversation. What has emerged as these work sessions and series is a current version of this germination.

Throughout the *New Landings* series, participants alternate between movement, stillness, drawing, writing, listening, conversation, sharing practices, and more. In stimulating dialogue, I offer written materials in between each week's class, and participants also share their writings and provide texts that are germane to the subjects that emerge through time together. My intention is to create a context for not only the participants but also my own growing, to support the development of colleague-allies in this inquiry. The work is situated in contemporary critical conversation in the fields of artmaking, choreography, critical race, intersectional feminist, queer studies, unsettling practices, embodied ecologies, and collective liberatory practices.[4] By enacting the research through art practice, *New Landings* could also offer perspectives to these fields. Some class themes have grown around embodying land acknowledgements, moving from one's own story and ancestry, conversing about resisting appropriation, making offerings in movement for one another. Art-movement practices are embedded throughout in the dialogue.

New Landings provides a space where discourse on complex ideas and artistic practice are enmeshed and enacted as different facets of a practice. Because it is in the domain of creative inquiry, there is a flexibility in traversing between different modes of working that can appear quite seamless.[5] In the context of scholarship, art and intellectual worlds can be conflicted[6], but it is quite a common for interaction of research and creation in the context of art and community-

based work such as *New Landings*. As with the work of a transdisciplinary gatherings such as Erin Manning's SenseLab, initiated in 2004, the process is a kind of "research-creation"[7]. In describing the term, Manning invites the reader to "take the hyphenation seriously," as a "mutual interpenetration of processes[8];" likewise this is true in the sessions described here. Manning also explains how in politico-aesthetics, responding creatively to social forces enables positive and generative effects. Through describing the propositions of SenseLab, Manning shows how it functioned as research-creation; with New Landings, due to its epigenic nature, rather than research emerging through following ideas, the ideas deepen and arise through the movement dialogue, the collective inquiry of the group, my own reading of the situation, and following my felt sense and attunement to what would be the next topic and practice, often based on what I have encountered throughout the week. Ideally, as the ways of working develops, there can be practice in distributing this leadership so that the topics arise from different vantages.

The hyphenate approach was also famously brought into public discourse through the seminal ideas of Gloria Anzaldúa, who so radically introduced the potency of the borderland as a lived experience. In a conversation about an epistemology of coloniality, settling, and unsettling, it is important mention the relationship between body-being and place. Rather than speaking generally or universally, we can localize: "I am where I think" rather than "I think therefore I am[9]," switching the perspective of body-being as in conversation with place. Borders are existential, aesthetic, and ethical conditions. Local histories have been hidden from people from all different contexts and cultural backgrounds; it's a fact of contemporary life. Border thinking requires dwelling in the border, and this can happen in relationship to body-environment, interculturally, as well as across modes of practice. This rejects an approach of "monoculture of the mind," and delinks from the fantasies of hegemonic knowledge, or absolutism[10]. *New*

Landings is inspired by what contemporary Indigenous scholar Kim TallBear calls a "spatial narrative of change," attending to obligations on a "web or plane of relations"[11].

Over the past decades, I have been developing a small school, called the ***vivid grove,*** — *for moving, learning, creative evolution, and collective liberatory practices*. Through the ***grove,*** I offer a mosaic of movement practices, nesting them aesthetically as well as contextually, and I have stewarded, shared, and created ways of working with people that are consonant with an ethic of movement dialogue. The hyphen is central to the multiple practices and projects and instantiates a relational way of being with body-environment-language. Diane Butler, longtime collaborator with the late Suprapto Suryodarmo and co-founder of *Dharma Nature Time*, stated how "non-violence for non-violence" is an "intercultural dialogic approach[12]." In a recent conversation, she explained how Prapto, having taught in the States over decades and in a long-term intercultural relationship with Butler, often felt the necessity for settlers from the United States to find landing, with gravity and earth, in the body and in lived experience, or as he called it, "re-membering in America." This is in part because the dreamworld is so strong here due in exemplified in the American dream, as opposed to for instance an earth-based cultural view as in Java. *Re-membering*, Diane stated, is an interpenetrative practice. *New Landings* likewise enacts the potency of this hyphenated space, of being in process, of receiving the unknown, and of making connections through working through, with, and around multiple approaches and languages, and (be)coming in relation with earth.

Other sources for *New Landings* approach came through reading about "unsettling." Some primary materials are Craig Fortier's practices in "Unsettling Methodologies" in research, Claire Urbanski's "Notes on Belonging, and Snelgrove et al on "Unsettling Settler Colonialism." While *New Landings* does not claim to enact methods for decolonizing, the kinds of findings

these different writings generated provide key sources for how over time I have developed the series. For example, Fortier defines several core principles that he compiled that he applied to his research approach through working with "activists and Indigenous mentors[13]". The ones I have incorporated into *New Landings* sessions: situating contemporary struggles within structures of settler worldviews, white supremacy, heteropatriarchy, capitalism; engaging in critical self-reflexivity; and seeking to embody practices in research and as life praxis. These different principles align with ways I work already, but to read about them helped to articulate what ***vivid grove*** practices are doing, provided a new lens as unsettling techniques, and situates the practice in a resonant theoretical frame.

As the *New Landings* field is centered in creative practice, I have been influenced by performer-writers that are working in resonant interpenetrative, critical, multiplicitous intimacy-building research-creations, many of whose materials I have shared in the context of facilitating sessions. Some of these artists are mayfield brooks, karen nelson, devynn emory, Jaamil Olawale Kosoko, Hana Van der Kolk, Keith Hennessy, Emily Johnson, SJ Norman and Joseph M. Pierce, Raha Benham, Luciana Achugar, Sherwood Chen, and Violet Ace Harlo. Their works enact the necessary unity of art, research, critical analysis, and dialogue in culture-based projects.

Practice

In the multi-varied practices of *New Landings*, one of the ways to make a step towards reimagining right relation is to consistently acknowledge the indigenous land where one is situated, and to practice introducing oneself from one's own lineage and ancestry.[14] While this is becoming a more common practice throughout multiple institutions and contexts, in *New Landings*, inspired by a practice instigated by choreographer and dancer Sherwood Chen, in a

class session, we took a period of time to use the subtle movement practices of receiving the atmosphere into a long period for land acknowledgement, where each participant could develop their own way, through movement and stillness, writing, as emerged, and then share what the group what each person collectively found. The intention was to create new inhabitations agentially, and to reimagine the intricacies of being-in-the-world through sharing space in right relation.

In facilitating *New landings,* I practice reading the situation, and playing with *transmodal* practicing as a way to support participants to receiving ideas in their body-being, and to invite their agency. In one session of a five-week series, we spent a long time in conversation about cultural appropriation, and it's direct relation to the extraction and extermination of Indigenous practice.[15] After a short open movement session at the onset of class, I invited participants to free-write based on what they could actually see in their home-space, clothing, and daily life that was appropriative, and after this we had a conversation. After some time, allowing space for most to speak, the air was thick, people were tanking. Over the weeks we had worked with acknowledging land and our own ancestry, and speaking from our own position and story, so from this foundation, after the conversation we took some time to move: the score was *dialogue in we*, *from our own position.* We danced together through the screens, practicing togetherness as well as what it could mean to move from one's own story, as a kind of poetic antidote to what was received with appropriation. Responses afterwards included a great relief and capacity to experience the earlier conversation with more clarity, circulation, from different angles. At times, the movement-dialogue is a source for integration and shifting the vibration of the space.

One of the challenges of this way of working, of supporting each person's voice and making room for dialogue is the subtle edge of providing space and centering dominant

perspectives. The danger is in relieving anxiety by supporting habituated practices of self-care and comfort.[16] At the same time, it is important to create contexts that afford participants to hold themselves responsible for the harm they are doing; flattening the complexities of cultural dynamics can naturalize supremacy. New Landings, through these practices, intends to enrich and acknowledge implicit habits and spatialize struggles to build a clearer sense of locality. Rather than a decontextualized approach to harm, the practices amplify relationship with place. I am interested in sharing these practices with a wide variety of demographics over time and tailoring the content to different participant groups.

The following is a document of a practice that took place in a *New Landings* session that was organized by the Oakland Summer School and took place on Zoom. It was a relatively small group of seven people, several of whom were colleagues and students. This practice was the final section of the three-hour class, and its intent was to support integration of several ways we had been working thus far. This practice invited in the idea of composition, and of the choice to work as "audience," which can support both safety and expand ways of listening. After movement, there was space for "digestion, through writing, moving, drawing, or being still," followed by conversation. I include the comments one of the participants stated after, as it gives a reflection of how the transmodal approaches can support new connections and demonstrates how the relationship between conversation and creative practice is in process together, interpenetrated, *Practicing with windows, audience, conversation in composition*:

"First, feel your own volume, your breathing, the light, your skin... And then start to move by opening and closing joints….. feeling the spaces in between the joints…. how your limbs create openings and closing. You can look through the angles you make, with your arms, legs and whole body, and start to practice as they are windows, which you can open and

close…… You can look through, choosing different angles of your frame and how you look, choosing the aperture, making decisions about what and how you want to see…. You can receive the environment as audience, both audience and mover compose how and what they see. Get curious about your own sensations, about where you are, and alternate between the two. Sensing yourself as part of the place where you are…. In dialogue from audience, in conversation with place…. Let the movement evolve in any way that is interesting for you, and from time to time, stop to recognize your condition, notice the composition, choosing and pausing…. Opening and closing. This movement dialogue, it's a conversation, with the place you are, your surroundings, the light, your breathing, perhaps the images on the screen as they come into your view, and the other movers… Allowing for a dance between conversation and composition, allowing both to have a place… "

A participant response:

> "DAMN! I felt this weight in my heart in the end of the digestion time, it really is so hard to talk about these practices and let people deeply inside them and yet the felt sense is so much of what we have been talking about, which landed so much. It was cool that I brought up the control piece because I was present to it and how I was being interrupted and disassembled to be in conversation. It turned out to be a familiar place where I am in conversation, where the world is making me and I am making the world, but it can be hard to get back there or tune to it. I had a moment of touching and feeling a chair. It wasn't appreciation because that implies separation, but it was self love in the form of conversation with and through this chair, and the way we were collaborating in my seeing . the way chair, the light and air were, they could feel the care and effort for the space to be made, not as an intellectualized experience but as something deeply felt and in dialogue, a "one with everything" kind of feeling. I really felt the agency with the rest of the world: agency of space, materials, objects, our entanglement and the invitation for my seeing to be a conversation revealed the conversation of this world co-creating

with me and revealing what it is doing, what all the elements are doing, not just a passive environment that I just tromp around on."

Further Developments

The thing about writing about *New Landings,* is indeed, like all lived experience, it just makes a lot more sense in the experience. In addition, it is a new form, and thus it is not yet definable. By spending this time attempting to compile the sources, practices, etc., I am made even more aware of how this work is in a process of becoming, and how this paper only describes just a small facet of encounters that contain the complex richness of embodied, lived, felted experience. In addition, for the process of distinction and refinement in research-creation, I have defined an approach around settler/settling /and unsettling, when in fact the practice of *New Landings* in fact is more centered around the dialogue between the potential for creation and critical discourse than analysis. Also, I am aware that I carry many unconscious biases that are operating in the ways I make art and stake claim to the material, which reifies the very thing I wish to upend.

In conversation with poet with disabilities, Denise Leto, a longtime collaborator and participant in the fall series, she gave some feedback that helped to express some of the ways *New Landings* took effect. She said the workshops offered a symbiotic experience of the personal and political, that the class was grounded both conceptually and through action[17]. She didn't have to center herself, as the context was communal and in relationship, though she came out with more understanding of how she functions. Denise stated there was a capaciousness to explore, and through the many workshops she has taken on historical inequities, this series offered interaction for intellect, artistic, and emotional realms. Leto expressed how any complex analysis of being a settler necessarily need to include the body, as it is through corporeal

experience that people are organized in space and it is through embodiment that there is a systemic parlay of power. She stated that she felt we were like a "forest speaking, forest communication," and perhaps that came from the power of embodied practices and acknowledgements. Finally, her words express so clearly what is the intent of this project: "When I put my body in my art and really feel my connection to place, that's when the whole ecosystem gets more vibrant and more honest." For Denise, intellectuality is not separate from the bodily experience of feeling all the elements altogether.

As I continue to practice receiving the environment, sharing, and movement dialogue, I imagine the form this project takes will continue to change. As I collaborate in thinking about this research-creation, I experience the tension of facilitation and stimulation, and expect to examine and perhaps reorient the project so that is has a more participatory leadership and instigation in order to unsettle itself. I am curious how to take even greater cues from the environment. I am also curious in offering longer sessions, so there is time to expand the ways the participants compose and offer for one another and imagine this will take place in time. I am also curious in what would be a way to present or share this work in a creative format, perhaps enacting movement scores, to more resonantly enact the transmodal aspect of this project as it is becoming.

New Landings is a project about process just as surely that it is in process. It is an embodied ecological practice in coming apart and together, and through that space, connecting, with body-being, each other, one's own commitments, and the earth.

[1] Ahmed, “A Phenomenology of Whiteness,” 156.

[2] Bunnell, *The Origin of Humanness,* x.

[3] *Cultural Appropriation in Spirituality.*

[4] For the paper, I will include a selected bibliography that was handed out for one of the New landings series to give a sense of some resources that are used.

[5] Leto, p.c. Dec 11, 2020

[6] Manning, *Thought in the Act.* 81

[7] Manning, 88.

[8] Manning, 89.

[9] Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Design, xv.*

[10] Mignolo, xvi.

[11] TallBear, “Masculinist Objectivity,” 496.

[12] Butler, p.c. Dec 12, 2020.

[13] Fortier, “Unsettling Methodologies,” 21.

[14] Arnold, *Decolonizing the Classroom..*

[15] This discussion was based on Tajëëw, *Indigenous Resistance & Struggle*, 2020.

[16] Snelgrove, et al, *Unsettling Settler Colonialism,* 21.

[17] These descriptions are paraphrases and verbatim quotes from Leto, p.c. Dec 12.

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New Landings
Selected Resources List
Fall 2020

There are so many, many resources that could be included on this list. This selected compilation is focused specifically on materials gathered for New Landings sessions in the past several months that either enact specific practices in collective intimacies, inquiry, and liberation, or through their orientations, the resources have been used to support their praxes. For a more comprehensive bibliography or further conversation on resources, please contact margit directly: margit@vividgrove.org

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